



CANADA.

MANITOBA

AND THE

NORTH-WEST.

NOTES OF A VISIT

By Mr. C. A. PRINGLE, of Caledon,
Tyrone Co., Ireland.



OTTAWA.

*Published by the Department of Agriculture of the Government
of Canada.*

1882

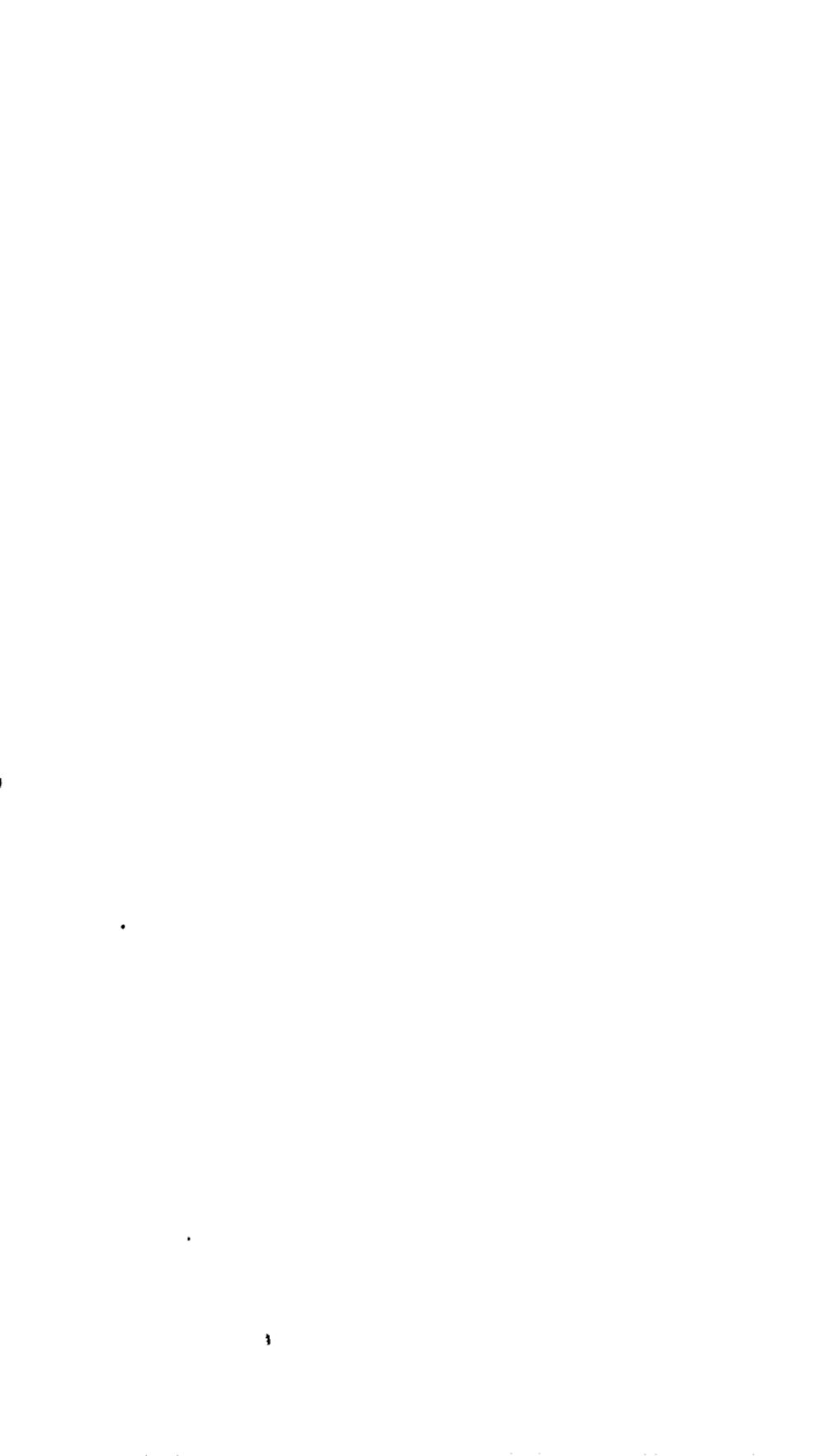


INTRODUCTION.

The following notes of a visit to Manitoba and the North-West Territories, by Mr. C. A. PRINGLE, of Caledon, Tyrone Co., Ireland, are published by the Department of Agriculture, as a report of the appreciations of that gentleman of the country over which he travelled.

Mr PRINGLE was invited to visit Canada as a Delegate from Ireland in 1880, but being then unable to come, he postponed his journey until the spring of 1881.

Department of Agriculture, }
Ottawa, May 1882 }



NOTES OF A VISIT

TO

MANITOBA AND THE NORTH WEST TERRITORY.

By MR. C. A. PRINGLE, of Caledon, Tyrone, Co., Ireland.

In view of the present unsatisfactory state of affairs in Ireland, and believing as I do, that there can be no satisfactory settlement so long as three millions of people depend entirely for subsistence on the surplus (if any) which remains after paying high rents and taxes ; and in view moreover of the fact that foreign competition has lowered the prices of all kinds of farm produce so much, as to render it still more difficult to pay rents, it is my opinion that the result must be a wholesale emigration from that country. The present crisis is a prelude to this.

My object in visiting Manitoba and the North West Territory was to ascertain whether or not the conditions which they offered were suitable for the settlement of Irish colonists. I was also anxious to see that country on my own account. I was asked to accompany the Tenant

farmers delegates who visited the Dominion last autumn, but I was then unable to do so. I determined, however, to make an early start in the spring of 1881. Being provided with letters of introduction to Mr. Lowe, the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Ottawa, I sailed from Moville, on the 16th April, in the Allan line SS. *Sarmatian*, on board of which we, in the saloon, enjoyed all the comforts of a first class hotel. I visited the intermediate and steerage and noticed that the passengers there were also well provided for, and appeared to enjoy themselves. After a very pleasant voyage we reached Halifax, Nova Scotia, at noon on the 24th April.

I had the good fortune, when on board the *Sarmatian*, to get introduced to several members of the Canadian Pacific Railway syndicate. The president, Mr. Stephen, very kindly gave me a letter of introduction to the Hon. J. H. Pope, Minister of Agriculture. On my arrival at Halifax, I took a ticket for Ottawa, but breaking the journey at Montreal, I stopped a day at the Windsor Hotel, and reached Ottawa on the 27th.

On presenting my letters of introduction, I was received in the kindest manner by the Hon. Mr. Pope and Mr. Lowe, to whom I explained the object of my visit. I was immediately supplied with letters to the several government agents, who were instructed to afford me every facility for seeing the country.

The Deputy Minister of the Interior, Col. Dennis, to whom I was introduced, supplied me with maps, on which he marked some of the most fertile regions, Coalfields, &c. The Surveyor General, Mr. Russell, also gave me a circular letter to all Dominion Agents. After receiving so much kindness and attention from the authorities at Ottawa, I felt quite at home though this was my first visit to Canada.

I made an early start as I was anxious to see Manitoba and the free grant lands of the North-West. I reached Winnipeg, the Capital of

Manitoba, on the 5th May. It is situated at the Junction of the Assiniboine and Red Rivers. Ten years ago its population only numbered a few hundreds. Now it amounts to ten thousand or over. Substantial and in many cases very fine brick buildings which would be a credit to any city, are taking the place of frame houses. And business of all kinds is in a most flourishing state.

I called on Mr. William Hespeler, the Government Immigration Agent, who furnished me with a good "team" and "buck-board" (the best kind of conveyance on the Prairie) and an experienced guide who knew the trail thoroughly. Thus equipped I and my guide returned by rail to Emerson, where we crossed the Red River by a ferry, the flood being so high, the new swing bridge could not be closed. We passed through West Lynn which is close on the international boundary line, a town only eighteen months old; yet it has a grist mill with all the newest machinery, several commodious hotels, a weekly newspaper with a good circulation, church and school, a number of good stores, and about one hundred houses. It is likely to become a formidable rival to Emerson.

The road or "trail" as it is called passes through the Mennonite reserve which extends for forty miles west, and contains some of the best land in Manitoba. There are still some thousands of acres of this reserve unoccupied; but as the stipulated time for settlement has expired this land will shortly be sold to *bona fide* settlers.

Our first stopping place was at a Mennonite village, where we had eggs and tea for supper, but as the houses of the Mennonites are close and without ventilation, I preferred camping out. These people, who came from South Russia some years ago, are very peaceable and industrious. The great majority of them came very poor, but they are all

comfortable now, and many of them growing rich. Their crops were far advanced when I saw them, and looked very promising. Some of the villages can turn out several hundred heads of cattle.

Our next stopping place was Brown's, where we had breakfast. The soil in this neighbourhood was rather light with sandy bottom; but I was informed it produced 30 bus. of wheat to the acre. I saw great numbers of wild geese, ducks and prairie chickens. Proceeding we crossed several "sleughs" shallow ponds with long grass, also a number of creeks.

The next place of importance we reached is called Mountain City. Though only a village yet, the site is very well selected on a rising ground, ten miles from the international boundary line. There is a good supply of timber convenient, and there is a saw and grist mill. The saw mill is worked during the day, and the grist mill during the night, one engine serving both purposes. There are also a church and school, post office and good stores, where farming implements can be purchased almost as cheap as at Emerson.

Passing Calf Mountain, which is only a rising ground, we stopped to feed our horses, at Darlingsford, where town lots are surveyed and staked off over old Indian graves. Here we were informed that the Penibina bridge had given way and was unsafe to cross; but we found it was not in so bad a state as represented. Five of the supports had sunk in the bed of the river. We crossed it safely.

The next place of importance is Crystal City. This has a church, school, store and Post Office. I noticed that the land improved as we went west.

Passing Clear Water, a nice creek appropriately named, we came to Badger Creek, which is large enough to be called a river. It is distant

115 miles from West Lynn. The land is high and rolling on both sides of the stream, which are fringed with timber. The wolf willow and wild rose, which are sure indications of good land, grow here.

I called on Mr. P. C. McKibbon, who immigrated from Caledon, Co. Tyrone, Ireland, two years ago. He has made a good selection of land. His homestead is on the east side of the river, and his pre-emption on the opposite side just below the crossing. His eldest son has made a good choice also, quite convenient. They have 320 acres each of splendid land of their own, no rent to pay and taxes nominal. His two younger sons keep the stopping place at the crossing and are getting their house enlarged to start a store. There is a good water power, which I have no doubt will be turned to account before long, as the district around is being settled up rapidly.

We stopped a day to rest the horses, and I was also anxious to get reliable information in regard to the soil, products, climate, &c. I took with me a sample of the soil which varied in depth from $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 feet, also samples of the produce. Mr. McKibbon pointed out to me a piece of ground which he enclosed for a garden less than half a statute acre, which produced 157 bushels of potatoes. The quantity of seed planted was 4 bushels. The soil is a black sandy loam over a clay subsoil very easily worked, after the first "breaking." A team will plough two acres per day with a furrow 12 inches broad and 3 deep. Wheat sowing commences at the end of April. Potato planting at the end of May. Potatoes are fit for digging in two months from time of planting, vegetation is so rapid; and no disease of any kind has made its appearance. Wheat yields on an average 35 bushels to the acre and weighs 64 lbs. per bushel. Oats 50 to 100 bushels weighing 35 lbs. per bushel.

There is a home market for all farm produce and will be for years owing to the large number of settlers coming into the country who are consumers for the first year. I enquired particularly about the climate. Mr. McKibbon stated after two years experience of it, that he found it was much pleasanter than that of Ireland and very healthy. It was not too hot in summer, and there was, he said, always a gentle breeze on the prairie; the nights, he added, were cool. In winter, the snow fall averages eighteen inches. It is a perfectly dry, and there is generally bright sunshine. The air is still except when a "blizzard" occurs, which only lasts for a few hours at a time. He also told me he never had better health or spirits; and that he had none of the worry and anxiety he had in the old country. He had plenty of game for the shooting, and no game keepers running after him. The rivers abound with fish also.

Next day we went north about ten miles, crossed Long River, which runs into Badger Creek, on a good bridge built by a settler. The trail crosses a picturesque valley, and after two hours drive we came in view of Lakes Lorne, Louise and Pelican. The north side of the Lake is well wooded, and the scenery fine. The land is rich and high with a good deal of brush.

Here we started a deer, and saw large quantities of buffalo bones scattered over the ground. They must have been very numerous. There were tracks in all directions.

Going west, we crossed over good clean prairie with some stones. Passing Pancake Lake and Government huts, erected for the accommodation of travellers, we reached LaRivièrre's on the 15th of May, distant 143 miles from West Lynn, where we saw a large number of ponies that we'd wintered out and they were in very fair condition. Mr. La-

Riviere is a French Canadian and settled in North Mountain in 1874. He keeps a general store and farms extensively. He also goes in for stock raising and has been very successful.

Our next stopping place was Beck's store, three miles from White Water Lake, which we reached just in time to escape a thunder shower. I met here two young men named Jankey, from Brookboro' Co., Fermanagh, Ireland. They have land convenient, but have not got their house ready yet to live in. There are quite a number of settlers in this district who are well satisfied with the locality.

I called next day at the land office for Turtle Mountain district, and entered for a homestead and pre-emption paying the usual fee of \$10 for each. At the expiration of three years I will have one dollar per acre for my pre-emption, getting my homestead free.

The country west of range twenty-one is not open for settlement; but still there are a good many "Squatters." These are a class of settlers who select land, take possession and commence breaking, building, &c., without having any authority for doing so. Afterwards, when the land is opened for settlement, they go to the land office, and their claim is recognized and they are allowed to remain in possession.

On approaching the mountain, we saw a strange looking object in the distance, which, on closer inspection, proved to be a tomb, the last resting place of an Indian chief's daughter. The rude coffin was covered with red cloth, and elevated on six poles stuck in the ground with forked ends in which were laid three cross rails which supported the coffin and to which it was securely with thongs of raw hide, the whole was enclosed by a railing; this is the mode of interment adopted by a few of the Indian tribes.

After stopping a night with Mr. Gauveray, who is the assistant in the Dominion land office, where we were hospitably entertained, we made an early start for the Souris River, thirty miles west. The land in this district is uniformly good, the only drawback being the distance from timber. But such a fine district of country cannot be long without railroad accommodation, and when the coal fields of the Souris are developed, the want of timber will not be felt.

We did not see a single settler for thirty miles until we came to the crossing. Returning by the same trail to the Land Office, we took the trail to Millford, which is distant 60 miles in a North East direction. Keeping White Water Lake on our left, we passed through an extensive marsh, near which we saw a specimen of the "jumping deer;" we could see it at a great distance bounding over the plain. Passing on through the Tiger Hills and between numerous small lakes, abounding with duck, we stopped for a short time in Lang's Valley, near which there is splendid land.

The next place of note is Millford, on the Souris, three miles from its junction with the Assiniboine. Here a town site has been surveyed, and \$5000 worth of lots sold. The proprietor, Mr. Rogers, is an enterprising man. He has erected saw and grist mills, which are driven by steam. There is a good water-power which he intends turning to account. The chief drawback to its growth as a town is its distance from the steamboat landing on the Assiniboine.

The land office for the Souris district is at the junction of the rivers mentioned; and here I parted with my guide and conveyance, and took the steamboat for Portage LaPrairie, whence I travelled by rail to Winnipeg.

As I had some time to wait for the boat coming down the river, Mr.

Mills, the assistant in said office, invited me to his tent where I partook of his hospitality. He had an English gentleman stopping with him, named Mr. Rouper, who has friends in the north of Ireland and who was also very kind.

I have now given a short account of my visit to Manitoba and the North West, and after spending nearly a month in that district of country and travelling upwards of 800 miles through it, meeting with all classes, for I stopped in the humblest shanties as well as the best Hotels, I have no hesitation in recommending it as a field of emigration for Irishmen. When I looked on its boundless Prairies composed of the richest and most fertile soil ready for the plough, I thought what a paradise it would be for thousands of Irish farmers who are struggling against high rents and taxes, bad seasons and low prices, to obtain at least but a scanty subsistence, without any prospect of bettering their condition or providing for their families. To all who are so struggling, I would say, "sell out for whatever you can get, and go to the North West, and you will never regret doing so." The large capitalist should go also; he can invest his money at 9 per cent in real estate. There

"A man is a man if he's willing to toll,
"And the humblest may gather the fruits of the soil."

There is no disturbing element in society, all are loyal and contented because they are prosperous, enjoying the fruits of their industry. All classes live well. There are no poor, and, of course, no workhouses, as we have in Ireland. Every day, large numbers of immigrants are arriving at Winnipeg, principally from Ontario, which is called the garden of the Dominion. They are, in fact, leaving there in such numbers, that the price of land has fallen considerably and there are a large number of farms in the market, which can be bought at from 8 to 10 pounds

sterling, per acre, with good buildings, fences, &c. The Ontario farmers are a shrewd intelligent people, and know their business well, and the fact of their going to Manitoba in such numbers, speaks well for the country. But I can assure my countrymen that no Colonists will be more welcome than those who go from the North of Ireland; and in my opinion, no class would succeed better. If the labour and capital which are being spent on worthless land in Ulster were brought to bear on the fertile soil of Manitoba, what a rich return it would yield.

As the best time to go, I would say, "the sooner you go the better." Those who want to settle on land can do so as late as the end of September. They will have time to raise a house and do some breaking for crop next year. But if they go early, they may get a crop the first year. Young men without much capital could get plenty of employment at good wages and if steady could soon save as much as would start them on a homestead.

There is a great dearth of female domestic servants or "helps," and wages are high, from \$10 to \$20 per month, 2 to 4 pounds sterling. There are openings for hundreds in Winnipeg and its neighbourhood.

The North West will soon be opened up. That gigantic undertaking, the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway, which will connect the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans through British Territory, is being pushed on vigorously by the syndicate. Their land grant extends for 24 miles on each side of the main line, the odd numbered sections belong to the syndicate, and contain twenty five million acres, which they now offer on most advantageous terms, viz : \$2.50 or 10s. stg. per acre with \$1.25 or 5s. stg. an acre of rebate for every acre broken or brought into cultivation within three years, and if buildings are erected the time will be extended to 5 years. Then as to time of payment 7 years will be

allowed, a low rate of interest charged on balance remaining unpaid after each instalment.

The even numbered sections are reserved by the Government for free homestead and pre-emption ; so that a settler by taking a homestead and pre-emption, and a half section of railroad land would have a farm of 640 acres or one square mile at a cost of £121 stg. without interest, provided he qualified for the rebate on the railroad land.

There would be great advantages in settling within railroad limits. Settlers could earn money by teaming, when not engaged on the farm, and supplies of all kinds could be obtained at reasonable rates.

The day after I reached Winnipeg, I started for Rat Portage, 100 miles east on the Canada Pacific Railway. There is a settlement at Selkirk ; and another at Birds Hill ; but further east it is not a farming country, being rough and thickly wooded. As you reach Cross Lake, the scenery improves. The railroad curves among lakes with numerous well wooded islands and rock bound shores. The largest of these, the Lake of the Woods, is said to contain thousands of islands and the scenery is beautiful.

Rat Portage is situated at the outlet of the Lake. It is remarkable for water-powers of enormous magnitude. This district is said to be very rich in minerals. There are gold and silver mines opened, and crushing machinery erected already.

Returning next day to Winnipeg I drove to Kildonan, an old Scotch settlement, and was shown land on which forty crops of wheat had been raised without either manuring or fallowing, and judging from the strength of last year's stubble it does not indicate any exhaustion of the soil. The yield averages 35 bushels to the acre.

On my return to Emerson, my starting point for the North West after an absence of nearly a month, I was surprised at the rapid vegetation which had taken place. Grass that was just beginning to spring when I left, was ready for cutting when I returned, and vegetables that were only sown were ready for the table on my return.

